

Physician Consultation Service Benefit Narrative

The Substance Abuse Prevention and Control (SAPC), a program within the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) and Health Agency, will implement an initial benefit package of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) services within the initial twelve months of approval of its Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS) implementation plan. The initial benefit package will include a Physician Consultation Service to facilitate the exchange of addiction expertise between DMC physicians and consultant addiction specialists (addiction medicine physicians, addiction psychiatrists, or clinical pharmacists).

Physician Consultation Services are services provided by SAPC in order to support DMC physicians within its provider network with complex cases that may address medication selection, dosing, side effect management, or drug-drug interactions. DMC physicians providing services in any DMC-ODS treatment setting, including adult/youth agencies and Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) settings, may request consultation.

Background:

A physician consultation is a correspondence in which a referring physician is seeking advice, opinion, or recommendation from another medical professional, usually a specialist with expertise in a specific area of medicine. Based on the information provided, the consultant specialist provides his/her recommendations regarding the question asked by the referring physician. In conjunction with the consultant's expert opinion, the referring physician utilizes his/her own professional judgment and other considerations (e.g., patient preferences, family concerns, other comorbid health conditions and psychosocial factors) to provide direct, comprehensive patient treatment.

Given the shortage of medically trained addiction specialists in the SUD workforce, the Physician Consultation Service is designed to help facilitate the exchange and dissemination of addiction expertise between medical providers and within the SAPC adult and youth systems of care. Examples of no cost case consultation resources that provide services similar to those provided via the Physician Consultation Service are listed below:

- UCSF Clinician Consultation Center for Substance Use
 - Substance use warmline: 855-300-3595
 - <http://nccc.ucsf.edu/clinical-resources/substance-use-resources/>
- Providers' Clinical Support System – Colleague Support Program
 - Peer-to-peer support program designed to provide support related to opioid use disorder treatment and pain management, including the use of MAT (<http://pcss-o.org/colleague-support/>).

Physician Consultation Service

Physician Consultation Services are provided by SAPC as a service to support DMC medical professionals within its provider network. This service is asynchronous (does not occur in real-time) and is initiated either via fax or online submission through the SAPC website. Physician Consultation requests are intended for DMC physicians within SAPC's network of providers only, and should not be initiated by non-physicians or patients. SAPC will continue to explore opportunities to expand this service, according to community need.

The content of the consultative advice offered through Physician Consultation Services is limited

Physician Consultation Service Benefit Narrative

to addiction expertise, and these consultations may involve, but are not limited to, management of complex cases, questions involving medication-assisted treatments (MAT) or drug-drug interactions.

Referring Physicians who are based at provider sites and seeking consultation are responsible for initiating the consultation by completing the Physician Consultation Request Form and submitting this information via fax or online through the SAPC website. All consultation requests must include a clear explanation as to the reason for the consultation, and include any relevant history and clinical details that help to inform and provide context for the concern/question.

Upon receipt of the Physician Consultation Request Form, a designated QI/UM staff will review the form and attachments (if available) for completeness, and depending on the needs of the individual case in question, may contact the Referring Physician for additional information if necessary. The QI/UM staff will follow the established Policy and Procedure (P&P) in processing the request. If the consultation request is non-clinical in nature, or otherwise determined not to require the clinical expertise of a physician, the request will be routed to appropriate SAPC staff that possesses the knowledge to address the question/concern. If it is determined that, based on the Physician Consultation P&P or the Consulting Physician's advice, that the question can be answered appropriately by SAPC staff, the interaction will be documented and response sent by email, fax, or communicated by phone to the Referring Physician. In this situation, where no physician-to-physician communication is needed, the staff will provide the requisite information to the Referring Physician accordingly.

Should the complexity of the question warrant the expertise of a physician, the question will be directed to the Consulting Physician. The Consulting Physician will utilize the information provided by the Referring Physician to write a consultation note within the Physician Consultation Request Form and make recommendations focused on the question/concern of the consultation request. The Consulting Physician will be responsible for submitting the Physician Consultation Request Form with the consultation note and recommendations back to the Referring Physician. In some complex cases, at the discretion of the Consulting Physician, the question asked by the Referring Physician may be put forth to other addiction physicians to elicit additional opinions and alternative treatment options.

For the protection of patients and involved physicians, Physician Consultation Services are strictly limited to routine consultation requests. Emergent and urgent consultation needs should be directed to more appropriate resources (e.g., emergency department, psychiatric emergency services). If the designated QI/UM staff, or Consulting Physician determines that a consultation request is emergent or urgent, or that the consultation request is otherwise inappropriate (e.g., patient's condition not consistent with services provided by the consult service), the Referring Physician will be notified of this determination and will be provided an explanation for this decision.

Physician Consultation Services are available during normal business hours (8am – 5pm) from Monday to Friday, excluding holidays. Every effort will be made to respond to consultation requests within two (2) business days from the day the complete information is received.

Physician Consultation Service Benefit Narrative

All local, state, and federal confidentiality requirements involving HIPAA and 42 CFR Part 2 will be followed during the Physician Consultation process.

Reimbursement:

Physician Consultation Services are provided by SAPC as a service for its provider network. The time DMC physicians spend seeking physician consultation is not currently a billable service.

Service Expectations for Physician Consultation Service

- *Documentation:* Documentation expectations for services provided as a result of Physician Consultation Services are the same as documentation requirements in other patient care scenarios. Referring Physicians at provider sites are responsible for initiating the consultation by completing the Physician Consultation Request Form and submitting this information via the SAPC website or fax. In the patient chart, Referring Physicians are also responsible for including thorough documentation of the patient encounter and the role of the Physician Consultation Service in informing that encounter. The Consulting Physician is responsible for submitting the Physician Consultation Request Form and consultation note (details below) back to the Referring Physician to complete the physician consultation. The Physician Consultation Request Form should also be included in the patient chart. All documentation should use language that is clear and comprehensible to non-physician Licensed Practitioners of the Healing Artsⁱ (LPHA) and SUD counselors.

The Consulting Physician or the designated QI/UM staff who provided response to the consultation request will document a consultation note within the Physician Consultation Request Form, as follows:

- Includes a brief statement that concisely summarizes the key elements of the patient's condition and the Referring Physician's reason for consultation.
- Succinctly addresses all requested and relevant dimensions of the consultation case while maintaining organization and focus on the Referring Physician's concern/question.
- Concludes with a summary of the pertinent clinical elements of the case, key assessment details, and a prioritized list of recommendations focused on the Referring Physician's concern/question.
- Includes a disclaimer clarifying the indirect nature of the consultation, for example:
 - "These recommendations/suggestions are based on communication(s) with the Referring Physician and information provided during correspondence. The Consulting Physician has not personally examined the patient and the Referring Physician holds primary responsibility for patient care decisions. Given the indirect nature of this consultation, recommendations should be implemented by the Referring Physician with consideration of the unique aspects of the patient's case (e.g., physical and mental health history, current clinical status, psychosocial considerations, risk factors, and prognosis). Please contact ___ if there are additional consultation questions about the care of this patient."

Physician Consultation Service Benefit Narrative

ⁱ A Licensed Practitioner of the Healing Arts (LPHA) is defined as one of the following professional categories: Physician (MD or DO), nurse practitioner, physician assistant, registered nurse, registered pharmacist, licensed clinical psychologist, licensed clinical social worker, licensed professional clinical counselor, licensed marriage and family therapist, or license-eligible practitioners working under the supervision of licensed clinicians.

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